For Immediate Release

Treatment Discontinued for Weakening Elephant

Earlier this week, Dickerson Park Zoo’s veterinarian and zookeeper staff discontinued medication treating one of the zoo’s elephants for a mycobacterial infection.

The elephant being treated, Ol’ C.C., is in her early 60s. She is the zoo’s eldest elephant and the fifth oldest elephant living in zoos accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums. C.C. is among the 15 oldest living elephants listed in the Asian elephant studbook for North America.

The animal care staff observed mobility problems in C.C. stemming from weakness in her hind quarters. The weakness may be a side effect of the medications or could be related to her advanced age. By discontinuing the medication, the animal care staff hopes to see improvement in C.C.’s condition. Throughout treatment, which began in January, they have observed fluctuations in her appetite and weight loss. The onset of physical weakness, however, is a recent development.

C.C. came to Dickerson Park Zoo in May 1954 as the original elephant in what grew into Dickerson Park Zoo’s internationally recognized elephant program during the 1990s. Her birth year is estimated to be 1949.

The prescribed treatment was recommended by USDA officials and the nation’s leading researchers studying tuberculosis in elephants. At the time the medications were first administered, C.C. showed no symptoms of active illness, only that at some point she had been exposed to either Mycobacteria bovis or Mycobacteria tuberculosis. Follow-up test results have indicated positive results from the treatment.

Throughout the treatment, C.C. has been housed off-exhibit with a companion elephant “Pinky.” The pair will remain off exhibit for now. Zoo guests can view two elephant cows, “Moola” and “Patience” in the exhibit yard.

For more information, contact: Melinda Arnold, Public Relations Director, 417-833-1570 (office), 417-848-0162 (cell), marnold@dickersonparkzoo.org or Mike Crocker, Zoo Superintendent, 417-833-1570 (office), 417-840-1188 (cell), mcrocker@springfieldmo.gov